

ACTIVITY 1 | Analyzing an argument essay

Discuss the questions. Then read the argument essay and answer the questions that follow.

1. Did you wear a uniform when you went to school?
2. Some people believe that children are too materialistic, or concerned with money and possessions, these days. For example, they may be too interested in wearing brand-name clothes and shoes, such as Gucci or Nike. What is your opinion?

WORDS TO KNOW Essay 4.1

associated with: (adj) connected to; related to

implement: (v) to apply; put into practice

incident: (n) an occurrence, happening

merit: (n) value; worth

on the surface: (phr) examined superficially

opponent: (n) someone who disagrees with a person or idea

punishment: (n) a penalty for doing something wrong

unity: (n) a connection among individuals; harmony

wealth: (n) a large amount of money or property; fortune

ESSAY 4.1

The School Uniform Question

1 Individualism is a fundamental part of society in the United States. Most people believe in the right to express themselves without fear of **punishment**. This value, however, is at odds with a recent trend. In the 2013–2014 school year, one in five U.S. public schools required students to wear uniforms, up from one in eight a decade earlier. Should we honor individualism above all else and allow public school students to make decisions about clothing, or should all students be required to wear a uniform? School uniforms are the better choice for three reasons.

2 First, wearing school uniforms would help make students' lives simpler. They would no longer have to decide what to wear every morning, sometimes trying on outfit after outfit in an effort to choose. The time saved from not having to search for a "cool" outfit early in the morning would be significant. Students could spend more time having a proper breakfast or reviewing class notes before going to school rather than staring at a closet full of clothes. Wearing uniforms instead of street clothes would not only save time, but also eliminate the stress often **associated with** this chore.

3 Second, school uniforms influence students to act responsibly in groups and as individuals. Uniforms give students the message that school is a special place for learning. In addition, uniforms create a feeling of **unity** among students. For example, when students do something as a group, such as attend meetings in the auditorium or eat lunch in the cafeteria, the fact that they all wear the same uniform gives them a sense of community. This sense of unity may also reduce the number of negative **incidents** that occur in schools. Students who attend schools that require the wearing of school uniforms actually feel safer than students who do not attend these schools.

4 Finally, school uniforms would help make all students feel equal. Students' standards of living differ greatly from family to family. Some people are well off while others are not. People sometimes forget that school is a place to get an education, not to promote a "fashion show." **Implementing** mandatory school uniforms would make all students look the same regardless of their financial status. School uniforms would promote pride and help to raise the self-esteem of students who cannot afford to wear expensive clothing.

5 **Opponents** of mandatory uniforms say that students who wear school uniforms cannot express their individuality. **On the surface**, this point has some **merit**. However, as stated previously, school is a place to learn, not to show off **wealth** or style. Society must decide if individual expression through clothing is more valuable than encouraging students to focus on what is really important at school: their studies. It is important to remember that school uniforms are worn only during school hours. Students can use fashion to express their individuality outside of the classroom. They can also express their individuality in school in other ways, such as by the activities and clubs in which they choose to participate.

6 In conclusion, there are many well-documented benefits of implementing mandatory school uniforms for students, among them making students' lives simpler, encouraging them to act more responsibly, and making them all feel equal. Public schools should require uniforms in order to benefit both the students and society as a whole.



1. What is the main purpose of this essay? Begin with *The purpose is ...*

2. What is the thesis statement? _____

3. Paragraphs 2, 3, and 4 each give a reason for requiring school uniforms. These reasons can be found in the topic sentence of each paragraph. What are the reasons?

Paragraph 2: _____

Paragraph 3: _____

Paragraph 4: _____

4. In Paragraph 4, what supporting information does the writer give to show that uniforms make students equal?

5. What is the counterargument to the thesis?

6. The writer gives a refutation of the counterargument by showing that it is invalid. What is the writer's refutation? _____

7. Write the sentence from the concluding paragraph that restates the thesis.
